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Editor's note

By Zipporah Abarca
Editor-in-chief

In honor of Sunshine Week, and as a reminder, it has come to my attention that some of *Central Michigan Life's* readers are unaware of our newsroom's relationship with the university and the principles of journalism that we follow.

It took until my second year being at CM Life that I realized we are a separate entity from the university. This means that Central Michigan University has no say in what we publish, as it aligns with the First Amendment: Freedom of Speech and Freedom of the Press. Additionally, CM Life gets the majority of its funding from our incredible, nationally recognized advertising and marketing team, that works with community clients.

Taking this into consideration, the work we do represents the voices of students, staff and faculty at CMU, as well as the community members of Mount Pleasant. However, we are not a voice with an agenda or a voice that speaks for the university — we are the microphone for voices that need to be heard, and the ones who work everyday to keep our readers informed.

Throughout my time at CM Life, I have been able to witness our core values and help implement them firsthand. Good journalism, like the kind we produce on campus, follows certain standards: transparency, fairness, accuracy and being non-biased.

Therefore, when we conduct our reporting, to be fair we must hear all sides of the story. For instance, when we hold the university accountable in our reporting, we let students speak out about the impact that has been made on them and give the university a chance to comment. This is fairness and showing a lack of bias by allowing all sides to say their piece. You, as readers, are able to interpret the information as you see fit — as journalists we do not insert our personal opinions to sway readers in one direction or the other.

To be transparent and accurate, we provide all of the information we have been given and make sure our staff is fact checking their reporting. To be even more transparent, we will hold ourselves accountable whenever there is an error in our reporting by leaving an editor's note for readers to see any time they go back to that story.

If we are asked to take down a story or receive feedback about the principles of journalism, we revisit these standards for every decision made in the newsroom.

At CM Life, we hold ourselves to these journalistic standards because that is what good journalism looks like. That is how we can do the work that we do and feel good about our decisions, even when we are questioned by others. Of course, we still appreciate feedback. However, I would implore our readers and anyone who does not engage with the media to learn more about what good journalism is and the way it has been corrupted. Then, take a look at our reporting and hold us accountable to those standards.

INDEX

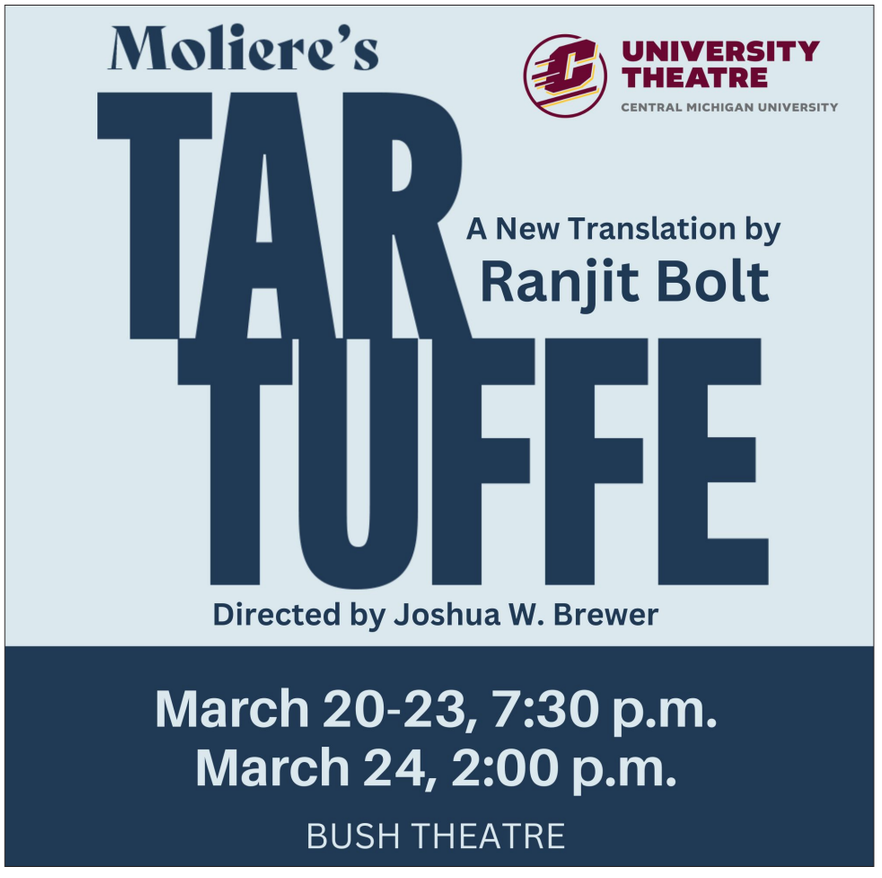
NEWS 6
A president's contract
Get the details on President Davies's closing contract, and the rationale behind it.

SPORTS 19
One athlete, two sports
Meet the sophomore star who turned a volleyball vision into a full-ride basketball scholarship.

EDITORIAL 21
Here to stay, here to represent
Central Michigan Life's leadership team is bucking national trends, and we don't plan on stopping anytime soon.

ONLINE
How color paints our world
In a new featured video, Visuals Editor Nico Mendoza tells BIPOC students' stories in their own words.

PODCAST
CM-Life Crime Time
Join voter-favorite host Abby Zimmerman for a trip through the MK Ultra experiment in the latest episode of "CM-Life Crime Time."



‘I knew I was meant to be here’

Tolmie sisters share the softball field for the first time

By Kaia Zimmerman
Sports editor

One day, Central Michigan softball senior Abbey Tolmie got a call to come down to the coaches’ office at CMU. She didn’t know what to expect.

There, standing in the office, was her sister Keira Tolmie. With Abbey looking at her confused, Keira said “guess what?” and with that, Abbey jumped in her arms, knowing that they would finally be teammates. Keira had decided to come play softball at CMU.

For the first time ever, the two would play on the same team. Before then, they didn’t think they would be able to.

When Abbey was going into her senior season at Clarkston High School and Keira was a freshman, they both knew it was a possibility of playing together. However, just after Keira got the news of making varsity, their season was canceled due to COVID-19.

“She made the team and then the very next day, the first practice was canceled,” Abbey said. “So, it was like a long time waiting to get to that point.

“I know you were still playing (with dolls) at my softball games, when we first dreamed about playing varsity together, and that was ... the big goal,” she said to Keira

When the season was canceled, the chances of the two playing on the same team for the first time became small. Abbey moved on to college softball while Keira continued her high school career, playing basketball and softball.

Then came the time where Keira had to make the decision of where to play college softball. Her first visit was Central Michigan; however, with advice from her parents, she decided to also look at other schools.

After going through the whole recruitment process, and with no persuasion from Abbey, Keira decided to join her sister and call Mount Pleasant home.

“Our parents always influenced us, like ‘do not just decide to go to Central just because your sister’s there’ because obviously (she’s) leaving after this year,” Keira said. “So, I did the whole recruiting process. This was my first visit, but then I went to a bunch of other visits, I checked out every school and every opportunity, and then my heart just took me back here because it was a no doubter.”

During the decision-making process, Abbey felt it was necessary to not try and persuade Keira to come play for the Chippewas, so Keira was choosing CMU for herself.

“I tried to never force it to be like, Oh, well, Central’s the place,” Abbey said. “But, I think just seeing the love that I have for CMU and the culture here, and my teammates and my phenomenal coaches ... I think just seeing all the love that I have for this program and my team (led to it).”

“(She) really didn’t influence me at all,” Keira said. “It was just, I knew I was meant to be here.”

Finding the love of the sport together

The sisters both started softball at a young age, thanks to their parents, who had a connection to the sport. As both of them started to find their own love for it, Abbey began travel softball when she was around 7 years old while Keira started when she was around 5 or 6.

“The love for softball came from our parents, definitely,” Abbey said. “We played every sport. We started with ... gymnastics, soccer, every sport like most kids do. And then (we) really dove into (softball).”

Even before they were on the same team, playing the same sport helped their relationship grow. Apart from the teams they played on, Abbey said their parents motivated them to put in the extra work, which led to them working together.

“I think it’s really special because we haven’t been on the same team together ever, but I think (she’s) always been my teammate,” Abbey said. “We’re always doing the extra work, our parents pushed us extremely hard outside of our practices and ... with our actual teams growing up.”

“We’ve always been extremely close, our parents instilled in us from a very young age that we are so lucky to have each other like we’re going to be best friends for life,” Keira said.

Keira said that her favorite memories as a kid always included Abbey, most importantly visiting family in Canada. Now, being able to create new moments on the same field as teammates is something they both won’t forget.

“Outside of being together, our other favorite memories have been from softball, so now we get to put those two together, which is pretty special,” Keira said.

Sharing the field for the first time

As the 2024 season has begun, the two are finally able to put those two things together.

In eight of the first 20 games this season, the two have batted in the first two spots of the lineup, with Keira following Abbey in the batting order. In the matchup against University of Alabama at Birmingham, Keira secured her first triple in her college career, scoring her older sister on the hit.

“When she’s up to bat, I’m way more nervous than I am when I’m up to bat because I want her to do so well. ... That’s my main concern,” Keira said. “But then when I’m up there... (I’m) loose and excited.”

Courtesy Photo CMU Athletics
Keira Tolmie pepares to bat for a non-confrence game against Villonova on Saturday, March 2, 2024.

They said they have been each other’s biggest cheerleaders throughout their softball careers, and have always pushed each other to be the best players that they can be.

One of the biggest supports they offer to each other is holding the other accountable and pushing each other. When Keira was coming to CMU, she looked to her older sister for advice.

That’s when Abbey started telling her about how hard their lifts are, and that everyone on the team can do a pull up, knowing that not everyone could do it. But to push Keira to be stronger, Abbey told her that.

With the advice from her older sister, Keira pushed herself waking up every morning before school her senior year of high school and doing 50 pull ups.

“I totally believed it, and I asked my parents to buy me a pull up bar to go over top of my bedroom door,” Keira said. “I come here and not everyone on the team can do a pull up, but she just got me prepared for it, so now I’m stronger than I would have been if she didn’t do that to me.”

Keira also said that Abbey has taught her how to enjoy the game of softball instead of feeling the pressure that comes with the sport.

“If you come to a softball game, you’ll see (Abbey) smile before every single at bat,” Keira said. “Instead of being tense, I just look at her and she’s over there smiling and having fun, so I’m like, ‘I love this, this is fun.’”

They both have learned a lot from each other, not only on the softball field but in life. Abbey said that Keira has taught her to be confident in herself.

“Keira loves really hard, and she doesn’t really have any re-

Marie Underwood| Staff photographer

Abbey Tolmie catching a fly ball against Ohio at the MAC tournament on Thursday, May 11, 2023.

grets," Abbey said. "I think (I've learned from her) to be unapologetically myself. I know that (she's) so confident in who (she is), and that (she's) just able to live life and not worry about what everybody else thinks of (her), so I think I've learned a lot about that."

Importance of family

One of the most important things to the sisters is family.

"Our parents are incredible," Keira said. "They would drop anything for us, and they've always done everything that they can to make sure we had the best opportunities to succeed in softball and academically."

Their family has always been their number one supporters throughout their softball careers, whether that's watching every game, hanging banners in their front yards or traveling around the country to get them to tournaments.

"My parents have given everything to allow us to be here," Abbey said. "Also our two grandparents on my mom's side; they watch every single game, even through COVID when they couldn't cross the (Canadian) border.

"That was really hard for all of us, just because we're so close. It's only an hour away, but at the same time it was so far."

This season, their parents will get to watch them take the field together for the first time, instead of having to split up like they had to on tournament weekends during travel season.

"For the first time in our whole lives, they're all going to be at the same place watching the same game, because for years, it'd be like Mom's with me, Dad's with (her) and then switch because we'd be playing at the same time," Keira said.

Leaving a legacy

Abbey is a senior and is in her final year for the Chippewas, where she has been a consistent player, starting in 155 games through her first three years.

In her career, she has hit a .350 batting average with 206 hits and 58 RBIs. On the defensive side, she has been a force in center field for the Chippewas with 257 putouts and a .985 fielding percentage.

Along with that, she has been named to the Second Team All-MAC three times.

"Our team talks a lot about legacy," Abbey said. "So I want to leave a legacy ... called a butterfly effect. ... (I want) to give what I've learned and pour into others and let them feel that and it bridge out into everybody else. ... I don't want to have regrets where I would leave the game without giving it all I got. I know that's not the type of person I am."

Keira has been able to watch her sister be the consistent player that she is at CMU and reach her goals.

"She has been an extremely successful player, and that just makes me very proud," Keira said. "But it also shows me that I can do it because I know that we compete with each other. And just seeing her be so successful just puts it into perspective that I can do this too."

Being a part of this team has not only helped Abbey grow as a player, but as a person. She said she will take that with her for the rest of her life.

"I have grown so much; I really noticed this year that I'm just like a completely different person," Abbey said. "I find that I'm empowered by all the people I'm surrounded by. I've never had true friends like I have at CMU."

Abbey gives a lot of appreciation to her coaches and teammates who have helped her every step of the way in her college career.

"I also think our three coaches have been ... the biggest supporters for me," Abbey said. "I think they've really shown us the importance of mental health and just being well-rounded because if I can be my best mentally, physically, emotionally ... putting it all together is going to be my best on the softball field."

Photo illustration | Marie Underwood

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Inheriting a difficult world

By Masha Smahliuk
News editor

Walking with students in corridors, sitting down with them at lunch and watching them perform on stage — those interactions are the best memories for Central Michigan University President Bob Davies.

Davies announced his resignation in a letter to the campus on Jan. 31. He will be stepping down as the 15th president at CMU on Dec. 31, leaving a little more than nine months to create a transition and solid ground for the future.

"Students, just keep on being amazing," Davies said. "You're inheriting a world that is more difficult than I inherited. Then, you're going to find a way, you're going to find a path to make your section of the world better.

"At the end of the day … I won't remember the frustrations. I remember seeing the joy in the students when they succeed."

Resignation and the contract

CMU Board of Trustees Chair Todd Regis responded to Davies' resignation in a written statement on Jan. 31, thanking the president for his service. Regis said Davies reached out to him over Christmas break, informing him about his decision to step down.

"I was a little surprised," Regis said. "And certainly, at that point, we had some conversation where Dr. Davies explained that his family has been talking about it, it was a personal choice. … And I think when anybody in any position of leadership makes a decision like that, I don't think he made it overnight in any way."

In an August 2023 Q&A with *Central Michigan Life*, Davies said that he planned to stick around for as long as possible.

But as a university president, Davies said he didn't have an opportunity to take a day off or step away for a week. Even when on family vacations, he still held work meetings. That made Davies question whether his goals needed to be more personal.

"I will still continue to be a leader in higher education in one way or another," Davies said. "(It) doesn't have to be from a presidency, it could be a different way. … My contract allows me to go into a faculty (role), if I so choose, and I've always been wanting to be engaged with students."

Davies will receive a total of $1.25 million in compensation by 2026, according to a separation contract he and the Board of Trustees signed Jan. 16. That includes an annual $450,000 salary until the end of 2025, an emeritus status and other benefits, including the use of a university car, country club membership and travel reimbursement for he and his wife, when the travel is university related.

His duties require him to act as a consultant for the next president. The contract also includes an option starting in 2026, to be a tenured professor in the College of Business and College of Eduation and Human Services. His proposed annual salary to teach a graduate course each semester is $243,377. Davies said he hasn't decided yet if he is going to join the CMU faculty after his presidency.

Regis said the trustees review and discuss the president's contract every year. When Davies informed them about his resignation, the trustees had conversations and made a final contract.

When it comes to working with the board for his resignation, Davies said it is standard procedure. He added it is also common to have a contract … that provides the opportunity to have … a transition year to look at other university presidents.

"I have full confidence in the board (that) the selection process will find the person (who) will take what we've created, this foundation, and continue to … make it stronger, better," Davies said.

Masha Smahliuk | News editor
Central Michigan University President Bob Davies poses for a portrait in front of the CMU Seal on Feb. 14, 2024. Davies announced his resignation in a letter to the university on Jan. 31.

The Board of Trustees special session will discuss the search process and appoint the search advisory commitee on Friday, March 15.

"For me, it's about finding the right person that can run the place," Regis said. "Someone who can build upon what the 15 previous presidents have done. Some of it's going to have some knowledge and experience that will be able to keep us on track.

"And especially when you look at our shared governance model to continue that and partner with the board and CMU students, faculty and our staff, to get us through our wonderful vision statement that we have put together."

Until December, Davies is the president, and CMU will continue to provide students with services as best it can, Regis said.

"Look, we have a boatload of applications right now for … freshmen and transfer students to come here," Regis said. "I don't want any of them to think that the university is in any way positioned poorly. I want them to understand that … we are continuing to move on everything to provide the best services and education we can at one of the most affordable prices in the state."

Davies, in his remaining time, plans to create a smooth transition for the next president and keep the university moving.

"It also goes back to making sure we continue to see enrollment growth, and making sure that we continue to see the growth in philanthropic activity," Davies said. "(Making) sure that we're following through on this strategic plan … so that continues to be that living document; continue to press on academic rigor and say, 'How can we continue to get better at the core of the academic heart of the university?'

"Those are the things that I'm looking forward to."

A leader's legacy

Davies said he is most proud of accomplishments in enrollment, academic standards, brand awareness, strategic planning and philanthropy.

"We were able to take some real specific elements from (students') academic records, academic excellence, just recently (we have seen a) nursing program," Davies said. "Over the past several years, we did an amazing job with data analytics, and (saw) the increases in the statistics courses and the math programs around those,

and I think those are absolutely amazing.

However, enrollment numbers have dropped by 33% since Davies took the office in 2018. When he was named CMU president, the enrollment was 21,705 students. It has been falling by about 1,000 students each year; most recent enrollment data showed 14,423 in fall 2023, according to university statistics.

CMU was Davies' third career presidency; he left a legacy in other places as well.

His first was at Eastern Oregon University, where he served as the 11th president from 2009 to 2011.

Tim Seydel, EOU's vice president for University Advancement, worked with Davies throughout those six years, taking trips together to lobby at the state capitol in Salem on behalf of the students there.

"I enjoyed working with (Davies) when he was president at the university here," Seydel said. "I think we did some really good work at the university and ... I always appreciated his energy and enthusiasm for student engagement."

At Oregon, one of Davies's accomplishments was the development of an independent governing board that focuses on fiduciary responsibilities, Seydel said. For example, the board built a sustainability plan, which Davies's successor continued.

Additionally, Seydel said Davies started working on international recruitment, taking trips to China to invite international students. He also worked on bringing in diverse groups to EOU's campus, especially Latino students, Seydel said.

In July 2014, Davies accepted the president's position at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky. In September 2018, he became CMU's president.

CM Life made several attempts to reach out to Murray State University; officials didn't reply by deadline.

Looking into the future

Davies reflected, when he was approached about the presidency for CMU, there was a focus to get enrollment back in order. It was important for him to not just admit as many students as possible, but to keep academic standards and build academic excellence, he said.

The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the enrollment numbers decline, Davies said.

Additionally, national data show higher education has been on the decline since 2010. That year, a record 21.02 million students matriculated, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. In 2021, the most recent year for which numbers are available, only 18.66 million American students took college courses.

"Every university is dealing with the same issues," Davies said. "This also is going to be an issue for higher education, probably, for the next seven, eight years."

Enrollment for EOU has been a challenge as well, Seydel said. According to the EOU website, there were 3,957 students in fall 2009 when Davies took over. The enrollment increased to 4,298 students in fall 2011 but fell to 3,653 students in fall 2014.

"There is no silver bullet," Davies said about increasing enrollment. "There is nothing that all of a sudden you're gonna snap your fingers and, 'Oh, we'll do this and, boom ... students (will) show up."

Davies said to think about enrollment in cycles of four or five years. Additionally, as students are coming in with more credits, they're graduating faster, he said.

"Having an increase in freshman class one year won't increase your total enrollment," he said. "It's going to take three or four or five years of increasing (numbers) that finally catch it up."

To secure the future increase in enrollment, Davies said CMU is working on academic assistance through supplemental instruction to help students get through their first two years at college, and working with academic advisors.

"I think that we've got some great professionals that are looking at numbers, that are looking at the best practices that we can do to help increase and stabilize enrollment," Regis said. "We're looking at future increases there."

Regis said there are opportunities for new students to come on campus and participate in programs, such as a new nursing degree. Meanwhile, improvements in dorms will encourage students to stay, he said.

"I look forward to continuing to make this a better university together," Regis said. "I look forward to us completing the presidential search and finding the best possible candidate to take on the legacy of the 15 previous and continue to do it.

"I look forward to all the great things that are already going on, on campus and the many more that we don't even have any idea will happen in the next step."

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Then and now: Diverse voices of women on the Board of Trustees

By Courtney Boyd and Lauren Pocica
News reporters

People in positions of power will come and go with the passage of time.

One area of power on Central Michigan University's campus that has stood the test of time is the Board of Trustees, an elected group that works to make decisions for the university. With over 62 people rotating through its 60 years of existence, they made various policy changes that have affected the university on small and large scales.

Women have been serving on the board since it was first created, and women continue to serve on the board today making various decisions that advance university policies.

The first CMU Board of Trustees meeting was held on Feb. 24, 1964. The members were appointed by then governor George Romney. The board had eight members, all of which were introduced in the 1964 February edition of *Centralight*. Two of these first board members were women.

Katharine Hafstad was a trustee that made her way through the ranks and became chairwoman. The *Centralight* article said she was a business owner, school teacher and Air Force veteran.

Hafstad served on the board for almost 20 years, retiring in 1983. She made several strides for the university, such as implementing anti-discrimination housing policies (allowing interracial housing off-campus and further investigation of discrimination cases on campus) and abolishing "in loco parentis" (the idea that the university could act as a student's parent when it came to discipline). She would also hire two university presidents during her tenure: William Boyd and Harold Abel.

She died in 1996 in her home in Harbor Springs, Michigan.

The other woman at that time on the board was Jean Backus. She was known for her work in the League of Women Voters, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America as well as various charity organizations according to her obituary.

Backus served two terms at the university lasting only eight years. During her second term, she served as vice chair for the board alongside Hafstad, passing the same policies and making the same strides the chairwoman did.

When Backus' time on the board ended in October 1970, she and her husband moved to Sebring, Florida. She lived in the state until 2011, where she died in her home.

Both women were passionate about education and making a difference in the world, whether it be through CMU or their other commitments.

Sixty years later, a new woman holds the position of vice chair for the CMU board of trustees. Her name is Denise Mallett. She said that being a woman on the board, it's important to make her voice heard to keep and share an open dialogue.

"It's important to me to uncover issues that may have been overlooked ... and to continue to pave a way for others to be in that seat," she said.

Mallett said she is pleased there is still representation of women on the Board of Trustees. Of the eight seats, three are women of color. She thinks that's a powerful move by Governor Gretchen Whitmer, who appointed them to the board in March 2021 and February 2023 respectively.

"Even though we're three women of color, we bring different perspectives," she said.

The second she was announced to be on the board, Mallett said she felt welcomed by the other two women on the board, Sharon Heath and Regine Beauboeuf.

Courtesy of the Clarke Historical Library, and first published in Feb. 1964 Centralight.

The original members of the Central Michigan Board of Trustees, including Jean Backus & Katherine Hafstad.

"To have that connection almost immediately has made it not only a joy to be on the board, but to build what I feel are turning into friendships," Mallett said.

Mallett was appointed and accepted her position in the board just over a year ago, completing the first of an eight-year journey.

"My years of experience has led me down this pathway and to this position," Mallett said. "It was my opportunity to give back, to serve and to bring my years of experience and knowledge to a group and institution. I take a lot of pride in it."

She has worked as an admissions counselor at Marygrove College and a professor at Wayne State University, which helps her stay connected to higher education, he said. Mallett's work on the Board of Trustees has affected the students at the university, and some students speak positively about their progress.

Tyler Zimmerman is the current president for the Student Government Association at CMU. While he has been a member of SGA for three years, he has only served as president for one.

Throughout his time at Central, Zimmerman has attended roughly four Board of Trustee meetings. Additionally, he has served on several committees as a student representative and worked alongside Mallett briefly on liasion committees. He will be working with her in the near future to select the next president for CMU.

"She's been a great champion for students on this campus," he said. "She cares deeply about students at CMU and is doing all in her power to support students."

Zimmerman is set to graduate in December of 2024 and will not be running for SGA president again. He believes his administration has made a great impact at CMU when it comes to shaping its future.

"It's been a great privilege and honor to serve this role," he said. "We've been fighting to make student voices heard, and I think we've been very successful."

Zimmerman's sentiment of serving the students and shaping history is one that Mallett shares.

"It's significant for me at this moment in time, in history, to be on the board that is representing a state and nationally," she said. "It's quite meaningful to me and I don't take it for granted."

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Raising the curtain on local businesses

Welcome to The Best of Central Michigan!

With the help of our readers, Central Michigan Life is pleased to announce the 23rd annual Best of Central Michigan Readers' Choice Awards. On behalf of our staff and our local businesses, we would like to thank you for taking the time to submit ballots for your favorite people, places and things in the Mount Pleasant area. It's an honor to help you help us identify the best bites, sites and likes across Isabella County.

We hope you will use this special edition as a guide for future purchases, visits and memberships to these local businesses and organizations. By turning the pages today, you will learn about our readers' selections and what makes the winners stand out in our community.

Whether it is the best place to drink a beer or get your back cracked, CM Life has your favorites featured here. Congratulations to all the businesses selected as winners or runner ups. We are happy to have you in our community, providing our town with the amenities, goods and services one would expect to find in a much larger city!

Thank you again to our readers and community members who helped to choose the Best of Central Michigan.

Food & Dinner

BEST ASIAN RESTAURANT
Hunan House
2157 S Mission St (989) 772-7386
Local favorite Hunan House offers a wide variety of favorite Chinese dishes, sushi, hibachi and pad Thai. Order in, take it out or swing by for a lunch special

BEST BAR
The Bird Bar and Grill
223 S. Main St. (989) 772-2493
Popular downtown watering hole, The Bird features a laid-back environment in which to play some pool and enjoy a round – or two – with friends.

BEST BREAKFAST PLACE
The Diner
894 S. Mission St. (989) 775-7210
When it comes to fueling your day, The Diner, a local favorite, serves various homestyle breakfast dishes such as omelets, pancakes, and sandwiches, among other options.

BEST COFFEE SHOP
Ponder Coffee Co.
(989)-317-0808 Multiple locations in Mt. Pleasant
Locally owned fan favorite Ponder offers coffee and espresso, non-coffee drinks, breakfast and lunch. Four unique locations on campus and throughout the city keep readers fired up.

BEST FAST FOOD RESTAURANT
Dog Central
111 E. Michigan St. (989) 317-3076
Things like applewood smoked bacon, mac 'n' cheese, shredded pickle, chili, crushed Fritos and peanut butter make Dog Central a fan favorite for fast food.

BEST FOOD TRUCK
Nom Nom Ninja
(989) 506-5340
Mobile caterer Nom Nom Ninja has put a handheld spin on traditional steakhouse hibachi. The locally owned and operated mobile caterer is once again our readers' pick for best food truck.

BEST HAMBURGER
Freddie's Tavern
705 S. Adams St. (989) 773-2180
With burger options that range from jalapenos to mushrooms Freddie's Tavern is a fan favorite. Stop in for the food but stay for the atmosphere.

BEST HANGOVER FOOD
McDonald's
Multiple locations in Mt. Pleasant
Our readers turn to an American classic to relieve the ache. McDonald's is the go-to hangover cure, thanks to its low costs and 24-hour drive-through.

BEST LATE-NIGHT EATERY
Dog Central
111 E. Michigan St. (989) 317-3076
Things like applewood smoked bacon, mac 'n' cheese, shredded pickle, chili, crushed Fritos and peanut butter make Dog Central a fan favorite for fast food.

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Food & Dinner

BEST LOCAL BREWERY & WINERY
Mountain Town Brewing Company
3068 Jen's Way (989) 400-4666
Mountain Town Brewing Co. continues to grow its menu concept, wine inventory and beer recipes, as well as offer events to help patrons enjoy both their drinks and their visit

BEST MEXICAN RESTAURANT
Los Aztecas
4445 E. Blue Grass Road (989) 775-8594
Repeat winner Los Aztecas is best known for its sizzling Jalisco Mexican cuisine, its cold, blended beverages and its warm, colorful atmosphere.

BEST PLACE FOR LUNCH
Max and Emily's
125 E. Broadway St. (989) 772-7460
Long-time local favorite Max and Emily's specializes in serving classic and custom sandwiches all made from locally sourced ingredients. Who knows, they may even name one after you.

BEST PIZZA PLACE
The Cabin
930 West Broomfield St. 989) 779-9167
A CMU tradition, The Cabin is this year's pick for the best place to get pizza. Try a custom-made pie or the infamous cabin sticks.

BEST RESTAURANT
Mountain Town Station
506 W. Broadway St. (989) 775-2337
Mountain Town Station serves meals like seafood, pasta, pizza and pub sandwiches, and unique appetizers. The former train station boasts a patio to enjoy for the warmer months.

BEST SANDWICH SHOP
Max and Emily's
125 E. Broadway St. (989) 772-7460
Long-time local favorite Max and Emily's specializes in serving classic and custom sandwiches all made from locally sourced ingredients. Who knows, they may even name one after you.

BEST STEAK PLACE
Texas Roadhouse
2177 S. Mission St. (989) 775-7427
Texas Roadhouse serves unique steaks and classic cuts like sirloin, prime rib and bone-in ribeye. This chain restaurant is also a great place to watch sports.

BEST SWEET TREAT PLACE
Doozie's Ice Cream Place
1310 E. Pickard St. (989) 772-2332
Doozie's, open from April to September, serves over 90 flavors of Arctic Swirl and 20 types of hand-dipped ice cream, as well as sundaes, milkshakes, malts, and floats!

BEST UNIQUE FOOD
Taichi Bubble Tea
1035 S. Mission St. (989) 317-4002
With its friendly atmosphere, Taichi Bubble Tea offers nutritious, delicious ramen, sushi, bubble teas, smoothies, crushes or hot drinks, in an assortment of unique flavors.

Services

BEST APARTMENT
Copper Beech
4750 E. Blue Grass Road (989) 779-8300
In a student-oriented community just minutes from campus, Copper Beech offers single- and multi-room townhomes and apartments. Amenities include in-unit laundry, walk-in closets, a pool and 24-hour gym access.

BEST ATTORNEY
Barberi Law Firm
2305 Hawthorne Drive, Suite C (989) 773-3423
Barberi Law firm the Mount Pleasant area with numerous areas of practice, including criminal defense, personal injury, family law, estate planning, workers' compensation and more.

BEST AUTO SERVICE & REPAIR
Auto Service and Repair
1001 N. Fancher Ave. ((989) 772-9500
Dagwood's Auto Repair, Inc. has experienced mechanics that provide full tire and auto service for customers from all over Michigan. Services include brake repair, engine repair, oil changes, preventative maintenance, tire installation and more.

BEST CHIROPRACTOR
Central Michigan Family Chiropractic Clinic
1112 E. Broomfield St. (989) 779-2225
Central Michigan Family Chiropractic Clinic, ran by Dr. Troy Henrie and staff, uses the most current and effective methods for treatment to help patients on their pain relief journey.

BEST GOLF COURSE
Bucks Run Golf Club
1559 S. Chippewa Road (989) 773-6830
Bucks Run Golf Club, with 18 holes, expansive patios, an on-site golf shop, and a full-service restaurant, is the community's favorite place to tee off.Fore!

BEST GROCERY STORE
Meijer
1015 E. Pickard St. (989) 772-4700
Perennial favorite Meijer once again took the crown for the community's top grocer, although it features much more, including groceries, electronics, clothing and household essentials.

BEST GYM/HEALTH CLUB
Student Activity Center
(989) 774-3686
From group classes to lap swimming, when it came to the best places to let off some steam, CMU's Student Activities Center (SAC) reigns supreme.

Services

BEST JEWELRY STORE
Ace of Diamonds
406 South Mission St. (989) 779-9919
When bling beckons, Ace of Diamonds is the community's best bet. The store offers a wide selection of engagement rings, Pandora bracelets, estate jewelry and more.

BEST NEW/USED CAR DEALER
Krapohl Ford & Lincoln
1415 E. Pickard St. (800) 772-5974
Krapohl Ford & Lincoln is the community's top spot for a new or used vehicle. It offers car, truck and RV sales and the Quick Lane Tire & Auto Center to keep clients safely on the road.

BEST SALON/SPA
Salon Blu Day Spa & Boutique
121 S University Ave (989) 772-8898
Indulge in luxury, serenity and style at Salon Blu Day Spa & Boutique. Skilled technicians provide salon, nail, spa and bridal services to help clients look and feel their best.

BEST TATTOO & BODY PIERCING BUSINESS
Evolved ArtForms
1222 S. Mission St., (989) 775-8288
For our self-expressing readers, the top place for a tattoo or body piercing is Evolved ArtForms. It offers affordable, walk-in services and appointments blocks from campus.

BEST VETERINARIAN
Mount Pleasant Animal Hospital
1611 S. Isabella Road (989) 773-7679
When a furry, feathered or scaled family member is in need of a doctor, our readers look to Mount Pleasant Animal Hospital. This clinic offerscheck-ups, medical and surgical care, six days per week.

CMU Campus

BEST SELFIE SPOT
The Seal
Break out those cameras and head to Warriner Mall and its monolithic concrete seal for the best, reader- supported, selfie in town.

BEST CAMPUS DINING
Dine & Connect
(Emmons, Herrig, Saxe & Woldt Halls) 989) 775-7210
CMU's overwhelming pick for best campus dining went to Dine & Connect in East Community. Offerings include customized salads, sandwiches, global cuisine, burgers and fresh pizza.

BEST CMU PROFESSOR
Holly Hoffman
Human Development and Family Studies.
Prof. Holly Hoffman is once again the most popular academic on campus. Her study ranges from the development of humor in youngsters to teacher professional development.

BEST NON-GREEK RSO
Feminist Leaders on Campus
flocatcmu@gmail.com
CMU's favorite non-Greek RSO is The Feminist Leaders on Campus (FLOC). It promotes intersectionality, activism, education, inclusivity, and service on campus, in the community, and around the world.

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Entertainment & Nightlife

BEST CANNABIS BUSINESS
JARS Cannabis
1207 E. Pickard St. (989) 572-0400
JARS Cannabis is a medical and recreational dispensary that offers over 100 strains across a variety of products and price points.

BEST HAPPY HOUR
Applebee's Grill and Bar
4929 E. Pickard St. (989) 779-2766
Applebee's Grill and Bar remains Central Michigan's top happy hour destination. Whether you're relaxing after work or getting ready for the night, the drink specials heighten the experience.

BEST PLACE TO BUY VINYL
B's Music
613 N Mission St. (989) 773-0777
B's Music, an independently owned instrument and record store, offers new and used vinyl, effects pedals, books, instruments and comprehensive lesson programs.

BEST PLACE TO BUY VINTAGE/THRIFT SHOP
Goodwill Industries
4529 E. Blue Grass Road (989) 773-4884
Goodwill has you covered whether you're looking to shop, donate, or find a job.

BEST PLACE TO DANCE
Wayside/O'Kelly's
2000 S. Mission St (989) 772-2391
Wayside/O'Kelly's is once again our readers' pick for the best spot to boogie. This perennial favorite is one of the largest nightclubs in Central Michigan.

BEST PLACE FOR COCKTAILS & APPETIZERS
Midori Sushi and Martini Lounge
105 E. Broadway St. (989) 775-7723
Perennial pick Midori maintains high standards in quality and freshness, pairing fresh ingredients like duck breast, oysters and salmon salad with traditional favorites such as sushi rolls.

BEST PLACE TO HEAR LIVE MUSIC
Soaring Eagle Casino Resort
Soaring Eagle Blvd. (888)-732-4537 6800
The Soaring Eagle Casino Resort is yet again Central Michigan's favorite place to hear live music. The resort attracts celebrated artists of all genres and generations, year-round.

BEST PLACE TO KARAOKE
The Cabin
930 West Broomfield St. (989) 779-9167
A CMU tradition, The Cabin is this year's pick for the best place to get pizza. Try a custom-made pie or the infamous cabin sticks.

BEST STUDENT MEDIA PODCAST
CM Life Crime Time
Moore Hall, CMU (989) 774-5433
"CM-Life Crime Time" delves into the intriguing stories and real-life riddles of genuine crime. Abby Zimmerman, the host, narrates the tension, intrigue, and insight into the criminal mentality.

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Navigating women's communities through the LGBTQ+ perspective

By Renae King and Jaden Merimee
News reporters

When growing up in the small town of St. Louis, Rose Stanyer, a senior at Central Michigan University who identifies as a queer bisexual woman, said she didn't have much support.

"There were not any queer groups in my high school, there were not any pride flags hanging outside of any buildings and it was just one of those things that you just didn't really talk about," Stanyer said.

She said although CMU isn't perfect, compared to her hometown, it's nice to see established support. Stanyer said the best thing CMU did for her was connect her with a diverse crowd that shared similar experiences.

"I've experienced many more openly queer people in the CMU community," Stanyer said.

For example, the Office of LGBTQ+ Services and Gender Equity Programs provides educational programs and events. It also helps to connect students with resources like on-campus counseling and student organizations like Spectrum and Transcend.

"We're a very inclusive space, and there's a lot of places for any individual to go," Stanyer said.

However, some students at CMU feel differently, such as Sophia Scarnecchia, president of Spectrum.

Scarnecchia, who identifies as feminine nonbinary, grew up in Ann Arbor, which they described as a liberal and diverse area.

In high school, Scarnecchia was the vice president of the school's queer-straight alliance, president of the Black Student Union and an active member of the feminist club.

"I grew up realizing the importance of feeling represented and the importance of overall equity that isn't really seen throughout our society," Scarnecchia said.

However, as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, Scarnecchia said they felt less welcome on campus compared to her hometown.

"My freshman year (2020), I definitely was more out and open about my sexuality than I am now," Scarnecchia said. "I've noticed a huge uptick in homophobia and transphobia on campus, too ... It was easier to be queer then than it is to be queer now."

Scarnecchia said one of their reasons for feeling more comfortable on campus then was due to meetings taking place online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"If you were wanting to go to Spectrum, you could just go online," they said. "Now when you meet they don't have the online option, so you're forced to go to a place in-person that is posted to the public. So technically anybody could go, even somebody who is homophobic or transphobic."

Navigating women's communities

On the other hand, Stanyer said she has noticed a rift in women's communities, where many people she's seen are more open about exploring their own sexuality and embracing intersectional identities.

Stanyer said womanhood doesn't mean anything by itself, but instead, it's a connected community of women struggling for equality.

"Women's History Month, for example, is about celebrating diverse women of great accomplishments," Stanyer said.

Scarnecchia said the purpose of Women's History Month is to teach others and to help them become more open to listening and gaining knowledge.

"Just because you may not apply to it, doesn't mean that it shouldn't matter," they said.

But, as a person of color and a member of the LGBTQ+ community, Scarnecchia said they don't feel fully included or represented within Women's History Month. However, they said they have started to see a change.

"There's definitely a new wave of feminism on the horizon," Scarnecchia said. "And I think with that is the embellishment of all sectors, not just race or sex, but sexuality, financial income and socioeconomic background."

Stanyer said while there has been an uptick in general acceptance, it ebbs and flows.

"The other side of that is I've also seen an uptick in more traditionalist content in groups, just generally of people who are trying to quote like 'return to a simpler time,'" Stanyer said.

While Stanyer said assuming that support for the LGBTQ+ community from the general public 10 years ago might have been close to 50%, she now believes it to be closer to 80% based on what she's experienced.

"The difference now is that the 20% is a lot more energized and vocal about it," she said.

The challenge of changing minds

"One of the biggest challenges is getting people to listen and change their minds," Stanyer said. She said the LGBTQ+ community can't change the minds of others who won't listen, so instead they need to change the mind of an individual that others will listen to.

Scarnecchia said institutions such as CMU should take concerns from the LGBTQ+ community more seriously. They said that while there are resources for students on campus, it's not enough to fully address the community's needs or concerns.

Stanyer said people in society should push for more inclusive spaces, which can even be in your home. She said to make sure the friends and crowd you surround yourself with are a supportive community.

CM Life file photo | Layla Blahnik-Thoune

A then-member of the Registered Student Organization Spectrum hands a CMU alumni pride flag to a festival goer at Motor City Pride in Detroit in this Sept. 18, 2021, photo.

"The world needs more privileged people speaking out against injustice," Stanyer said.

Stanyer said she feels people assume that since she is bisexual and dating a man, she isn't also queer. She said people treat her sexuality like it isn't legitimate, recognized or respected.

"That's something I struggle with," Stanyer said. "When you're talking about your relationships with other people and they don't see the full complexity and beauty of it, they only see the details that their mind can relate with."

Jada Myrick, a student assistant for the Office of LGBTQ+ Services at CMU, who identifies as nonbinary feminine presenting, said a common struggle within the community is feeling excluded in certain areas.

"I am bisexual, and I can tend to identify with whatever partner I am at the time because it's often the stigma that you just have to choose a side," Myrick said.

They said no matter how you identify, it doesn't change your sexuality.

"Surround yourself by loving and accepting people," Myrick said. "Never water yourself down or make yourself more palatable for someone."

Stanyer said one of the biggest strategies to help support the LGBTQ+ community is taking inclusivity with you, bringing it into the rest of the world and making it a reality.

"Allies, the best thing they can do is just fight for diversity in every arena," Stanyer said. "Whether it's at the Thanksgiving table, whether it's at work, just try and be an agent of change."

Scarnecchia said exploring gender and identity should come with the understanding that there is no deadline.

"Some people go throughout life and never even know what to call themselves or what they identify as, and that is OK," they said. "Do what makes you happy."

From player to head coach

How Jake Sabol's CMU baseball career came full circle

By Hunter Gudyka
Sports reporter

After five years that featured three NCAA tournament appearances, Central Michigan baseball found itself without a coach when Jordan Bischel left CMU for Cincinnati. Less than two weeks later, the Chippewas found their guy — new coach and former CMU starting pitcher Jake Sabol.

"It's pretty surreal, to be honest," Sabol said on getting the job. "You get into the thick of practice and being around the guys and just realizing that you're doing what you've been doing for the last 10 years, but now you're doing it in a place that kind of gave you your start in college baseball."

Sabol, who is a graduate of De La Salle Collegiate High School in Warren, attended Central Michigan in 2007 as a part of the baseball team. But in his first two years, he only totaled 30 innings.

"My path ... as a player was not the most ordinary path," Sabol said. "When I came in here, I was probably a little overlooked. I didn't get many chances right away, but you had to go about your business in a certain way in order to achieve those chances later, and that's just in life too."

He became a big part of the rotation in his final two years, when he found himself a weekend starter for the Chippewas. He was especially good in his senior season, going 4-2 in Mid-American Conference play and posting a 3.18 ERA (earned runs average) and 53 strikeouts.

Following his senior year, Sabol was drafted in the 36th round by the Detroit Tigers.

"Hopefully that allows me to be able to reach a handful of different guys in our program a little bit differently," Sabol said. "These guys are here for a couple of different reasons. One, they want to compete at a high level — they want to play college baseball — but they also love something about Central Michigan, and that's really important to me."

In the 2011 season, the Chippewas finished 31-27 overall and 17-9 in MAC play, which led them to the top of the MAC West division. The team would eventually fall in the semifinals of the MAC tournament to Miami (OH).

As a former player who experienced winning at CMU, Sabol understands the relationships needed in the clubhouse in order to be a successful team.

"When I first got the job, it was so important for me to call these guys one by one and get their opinions of what Central Michigan baseball meant to them. ... What, from that last tenure, did we really enjoy that we feel like we could maybe continue forward with, and what was something that was missing that they wanted to get out of their experience," Sabol said.

This isn't the first coaching stop for Sabol. He had three successful tenures prior to this opportunity. Those were at Alma (16-18) where he compiled a record of 67-59.

His second stop was at Northwood University, where he took over the reins from Bischel. In five years at Northwood, Sabol was able to compile a record of 140-90-1.

"That was the place where I was at the longest as the head coach," Sabol said. "That was where I could build the program essentially the way that I wanted to do it.

"I'm very great thankful for my experience there. There were not really any other places I'd ever looked to leave for, outside of this. So that should probably tell you what I think about that place," Sabol now plans to bring the best players to Central Michigan Univeristy.

"If you're not too familiar with the history of the program, or Central Michigan in general, and you come on campus, you'll learn a ton about what this university can offer from an academic standpoint, and the Mount Pleasant community," Sabol said.

"I think we're the only school in the MAC that has a one-stop-shop of an indoor facility, a clubhouse, an athletic training room, a meeting space, a practice field, all essentially attached to your dugout," Sabol said. "There are some other great facilities in the conference ... but to have you walk in one door and you can do all those things, I think our guys are super lucky to have that."

As a former player and coach, Sabol has strong opinions on the CMU community and what it means to be a Chippewa.

"I think it's a great question," Sabol said. "When I talk to former players now, and they recommend a player that they're coaching or that they saw on the road, they usually always end with, 'this kid he's really good but he's not (a) Chippewa.'

"Tougher kids who had their back against the wall and they were written off a little bit," "They ... want to be around a group of guys who cares about being really good and competing at a high level."

When it's all said and done, Sabol said he wants not just to be remembered for the product on the field, but he wants his team to embrace what it means to be a Chippewa.

"We're going to talk about it often, but if we're so obsessed with 'We have to win a championship,' we lose out on all the really cool things that happened leading up to that," Sabol said. "(I) want them to enjoy it day-by-day ... being a Chippewa and what that all entails."

CM Life file photo | Andrew Kuhn

Senior pitcher Jake Sabol takes the mound against the NIU Huskies in this May 2011 photo. Sabol has since returned to Central Michigan University baseball as its head coach.

Courtesy photo | Bruce Waterford via CMU Athletics

Jake Sabol coaches at the Oklahoma State Cowbows vs. Central Michigan University game March 1 at O'Brate Stadium in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Double Teamed

Nico Mendoza | Visuals editor
CMU junior Alina Anderson poses for a portrait, Tuesday, Feb. 27, in Wightman Hall.

By Sydney Neal
Sports reporter

Growing up in a disciplined household in Rockford, Michigan, sophomore Alina Anderson became used to juggling multiple things at one time. Anderson's love for sports began early, and she quickly established herself as a three-sport athlete during her high school years, playing soccer, basketball and volleyball.

As she began to think about her future, Anderson faced a hard decision of choosing one sport to continue pursuing. In her junior year of high school, Anderson signed to play volleyball at Ferris State, eliminating her soccer and basketball careers.

However, last year brought a surprising turn of events: Anderson transferred to Central Michigan to play volleyball.

What she didn't know was the door to a basketball career was about to crack open.

"I signed to play at Ferris ... I didn't have the best experience there and I don't think it was the right fit for me," Anderson said.

"I would say the year of '23 was a lot of change for me, just because I started off transferring here for volleyball and had a great first semester here. My volleyball teammates are awesome, and my coaches are awesome."

While volleyball initially took the collegiate spotlight, basketball was the sport she always loved. Despite expectations, Anderson found herself drawn to the challenge and excitement of playing basketball again.

"Basketball has always been the sport that I love most," Anderson said. "My sister played basketball for four years at Ferris, ... my brothers both play and my mom went to school for it. So, I think that it's been in our family for a long time and when I committed to volleyball, people were kind of surprised I didn't go down the basketball route."

An unexpected twist in her athletic journey came when the volleyball coach informed her that the basketball program was interested in adding her to the roster, led by first-year head coach Kristin Haynie who had a previous connection with Anderson.

"End of November or beginning of December, my volleyball coach

See ANDERSON page | 20

ANDERSON

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

texted me in class and was like 'Hey we need to talk,'" Anderson said. "The basketball coach was interested in me, and coach (Haynie) was one of my trainers in middle school so it's kind of a small world and I knew she was coming here."

With commitments to both volleyball and basketball, Anderson faced the challenge of managing a demanding schedule. Balancing practices, games and academic responsibilities can be mentally exhausting, but because of Anderson's experience in being a multi-sport athlete in high school, it comes naturally.

"I've gotten this question a lot," Anderson said. "Honestly, I kind of just do it. I don't really think too much about it. Each day I wake up and I'm at the gym from 7 (a.m.) to 1:30 or 2 (p.m.), depending on if I have volleyball that day. I go from practice to practice, and I'll eat in between. Honestly, it reminds me of high school.

"School has never been a big struggle of mine, which I'm grateful for."

Despite the mental and physical challenges, Anderson expressed gratitude for the support she receives from her family, teammates and coaches, who continue to check in on her and provide her with necessary resources.

"Alina is a mentally tough person," Haynie said. "On top of her full class schedule, she is doing basketball practice and, later in the day, volleyball workouts, as well as getting in the gym (extra time) and getting shots up on her own. She is a true definition of someone that is invested in not only volleyball, but women's basketball."

When transferring to Central Michigan, Anderson was placed on the volleyball team without a scholarship. She worked twice as hard to prove her worth. Now being on another Division I team, she continued to show her persistence in both, growing as a player.

"Alina brings tremendous passion and toughness to our team everyday," Haynie said. "She is constantly talking and bringing energy to our practices. She's a sponge and very coachable, and she does everything you ask of her without complaining."

This challenge came with new emotions for Anderson. She was now facing being away from family for longer periods, due to the overlapping seasons of her sports.

In a time of homesickness, the basketball staff gathered an emotional surprise for Anderson, including a video from her family at home. What she didn't know, was her family was presenting her with a basketball scholarship.

"I was missing home and that video came up of my family, so I started to tear up," Anderson said. "I thought it was just a getting to know our new teammate video, but (Haynie) kept the video going and they all said, 'Congrats on your full-ride scholarship' and I was just filled with joy.

"I work so hard ... this has always been a part of my nature. I don't like being average, and getting that scholarship felt like I had finally been rewarded for all my hard work."

Anderson is grateful for her coaches, especially Haynie whose style, she said, is focused on rebuilding.

"She is a great coach," Anderson said. "Words can't describe how much she does for our program. She's trying to rebuild this culture and to be a part of that is really cool. She's so kind, she cares so much but she's also hard on us and holds us to a high standard, and I think that's something a lot of coaches might struggle with."

Anderson views herself as part of a larger narrative, contributing to the rebuilding process of both the basketball and volleyball programs. She continues to acknowledge the influence of the strong women in her life, particularly her coaches, who have played a significant role in shaping her perspective.

"My basketball coaches are four very empowering women," Anderson said. "They are so confident in what they do ... and I think that's honestly made me more of a powerful woman myself. I have two women on my coaching staff for volleyball, and they are also very empowering."

As she looks ahead, Anderson is excited about the opportunity to continue playing both volleyball and basketball at CMU. Her love for basketball continues to grow, and she remains dedicated to her faith, which plays a significant role in her journey.

"It takes a lot of drive and time management," Anderson said. "You have to be willing to sacrifice a lot. I am really strong in my faith and that honestly helps me a lot because I know this is part of God's plan for me, and I know that this is what I am supposed to be doing right now."

Editorial: Here to represent, here to stay

How do we define the female experience? The positives? The negatives? The expectations?

Any woman could tell you there's plenty of each.

More important to ask, though, is how to understand the female experience. As members of the media, we at *Central Michigan Life* know the responsibility we have: not just professionally, but personally.

The way women are perceived, and even the way we understand ourselves, is impacted by the media we're consuming, from books to movies, TikTok to Instagram, and, of course, the news.

A lot of that perception is based on physical appearance; whether we're conscious of it or not, a lot of women start to compare themselves to the person we see on screen.

What that comparison fails to capture is that: first, we are real and the character is not; and second, the real women who fit into those roles spend their time off-screen with dietitians and personal trainers that the rest of us don't have access to with time and financial barriers.

A study published in the National Library of Medicine documented what happens externally when objectifying generalizations become "cultural ideals."

"In turn, factors associated with exposure to these representations have been linked to detrimental effects on physical and psychological well-being," the study explained, listing a few specific effects:

- Development of eating disorders
- Increased awareness of the body
- Poor body image and
- Lowered quality of life

It's not only about what we disproportionately see — thin, young, white women — but also what we're not seeing — the diverse sizes, ages and races that women in the real world represent.

At CM Life we have an editorial leadership team of nine students, six of those are women, two are gender non-conforming and one is a man.

Our newsroom bucks the trend identified in a research partnership between Reuters Institute and Oxford University in 2023.

"Only 22% of the 180 top editors across the 240 (news outlets) covered are women," the research showed. "In 2022, this figure was 21% across the same markets."

CM Life hasn't always been led by women. Like most newsrooms, this was a male-dominated space for a long time. Consider this:

- The first female director of student media was hired in 2022;
- Ashley Birkness, CM Life's sports editor in 2023, was the first woman in that position in 50 years;
- We have seen two years of female leadership in the Editor-in-Chief position;
- Kathy Simon is the first and only person to hold the position of assistant director and advertising leader, driving our financial success for over a quarter of a century; and
- The first female member of the editorial board was on staff during World War II.

So what does this mean for our coverage? It means what we publish is filtered by individuals with an acute awareness of the impact our coverage can have on the people who read it.

As editors, we instruct our reporters to talk to sources who don't look like us, and our photographers to take photos of people who aren't always represented.

It means that as the people behind the media, we're representing those diverse races, ages and sizes that so often go underrepresented in other newsrooms.

One specific area of reporting is a more glaring example of inequity than the rest: sports.

A survey by the Pew Research Center showed that despite a male-female split of 51% to 46% in overall reporters, the divide in sports reporters in the United States remains closer to 83% male to 15% female.

Our sports desk has a 50-50 split of men and women, and their editor, Kaia Zimmerman, is the third female sports editor at CM Life.

Why does she do it? The same reason the rest of us do our jobs here: Because she has a passion, and her knowledge could wipe the floor with the average fan of any sport. But she wouldn't do that; she's really nice.

The same Reuters-Oxford research identified that male-dominant newsrooms are often the reason women disproportionately leave the profession before retirement age.

But we are here to stay. We are here to represent. We are not here to be compared to our male counterparts, but to do something that matters.

We are here to prove our merit not in the category of "women reporters," but to the higher callings of truth, transparency and journalistic integrity.

So what are we asking of you? The same thing we're asking ourselves. When you're in a room, take a look around. Notice who's there, but also think about who could be missing. And then ask our favorite question: why?

UPCOMING EVENTS

3/19

Women's Empowerment Panel: 6:30 p.m., Sarah and Daniel Opperman Auditorium in the Park Library; Hosted by Wish and the Office of LGBTQ Services and Gender Equity Programs

3/20

Wellness Works for Us!: 6 p.m., UC Terrace Rooms; Hosted by WGS Capstone, Faith in Femininity and the Office of LGBTQ Services and Gender Equity Programs.

3/21

The Light Within Us: 6:30 to 8 p.m., Location TBD; Hosted by the Institute of Transformative Dialogue and the Office of LBGTQ Services and Gender Equity Programs.

3/26

Create Your Own Self Care Package! 3 to 5 p.m., Central Eats; Hosted by the Office of LGBTQ Services and Gender Equity Programs.

3/28

Yoga for Every Body: 5 to 6 p.m., CSID (Bovee U.C. Room 108); Hosted by Collegiate Panhellenic Council and the Office of LGBTQ Services and Gender Equity Programs.

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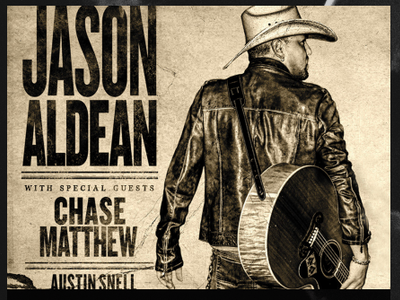

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